

**“Paul's Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —
Christ in You the Hope of Glory”**

- **Introduction:**

- ***The church in Colosse, its location and founding***
 - ***Where is Colosse? It is situated on the southwestern Mediterranean coast of modern day Turkey along with other ancient cities of Ephesus, Hierapolis, and Laodicea.***
 - ***There are many names mentioned in this letter, 8 in the last chapter alone. It is a very personal letter therefore.***
 - ***One name that is very important to the apostle is mentioned twice, that of Epaphras. He seems to be the leader of that church and was perhaps its founder probably having been sent out as a missionary by Paul while he was in Ephesus.***
 - ***It does not seem that Paul ever visited the city of Colosse. Apparently Epaphras came to Rome to see Paul and reported on the challenges there and thus this letter was written. False teachers had come into the church and were teaching some kind of Gnostic legalism which denied Christ's uniqueness and even deity and promoted Jewish legalisms. So it was a mix of Greek philosophy and a works-oriented religious system which was subverting the truths of grace. We live in a similar time today with new-age spirituality replacing the word of grace on every side.***
 - ***This is a late letter, probably written around the year 63 AD during the early reign of the Emperor Nero. Paul was under house arrest and wrote the letters of Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon and perhaps others during this time. He was released and then likely engaged in another missionary journey before his final imprisonment under Nero that led to his martyrdom around 67 or 68 A.D.***
 - ***One cannot find higher, more exalted and heavenly teaching anywhere in the Bible than this here except perhaps in the Ephesian letter written at the same time. Along with the letter to Philemon, the Ephesian and the Colossian letters were carried to these cities by Tychicus and Onesimus according to tradition.***

Overview:

The Work of Almighty God Under Grace is Revealed by Paul to the believers in Colosse. That teaching falls under these thematic headings, and they are all so very important:

- ***Christ Jesus Is The Creator, The Head Of The New Creation, And Is Head Of The Body Church***
- ***The Revelation Of The Mystery Dispensation Of Grace Is Given Through Paul***
- ***The New Life in Christ Is Above and Beyond New Age Legalisms of Every Kind***
- ***The Essence of Living Christ in the Present Evil Age Is our Privilege***
- ***All Are Exhorted To Let the Grace of Christ Reign That God's Mighty Working Today During This Mystery Dispensation May Be Fully Displayed to the Entire Creation***

Our Scripture: Chapter 1 of the letter to the Colossians

Our Outline Today: Glory, Glory, Glory, According to the Revelation of the Mystery Through Paul:

- ***God Wants All To Know That He Has Worked in Us Gloriously by his Grace***
- ***God Desires That We Know How Glorious his Work of Grace Is***
- ***Christ the Creator of all Things Is Also our Glorious Savior and Head***
- ***We Are the Eternal Focus of Christ's Glorious Plan of Reconciliation***
- ***Paul's Message and Ministry for his Church Is Now Revealed for his and our Eternal Glory***

I. God Wants All To Know That He Has Worked in Us Gloriously by his Grace:

[READ] Col. 1:1-8

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

- *Grace, peace, and eternal hope for Gentile sinners through the gospel stands written boldly here at the beginning of this letter.*
- *“The Word of the Truth of the gospel”: Truth is highlighted here twice. That is so important, isn’t it? Without truth we have only lies and they are ultimately in their essence from Satan himself.*
- *Epaphras preached the “grace of God in truth” and Paul writes here that the Colossians believed it as the word of the eternal God. This Paul had taught Epaphras and thus he preached in Colosse, and so they had believed.*
- *Their love assured Paul of the reality of their faith, as here testified to the Colossians.*

II. God Desires That We Know How Glorious his Work of Grace Is:

[READ] Col. 1:9-12

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

- *“Do not cease to pray”: Paul’s prayers so often included the Colossian believers that he writes here of “always” praying on their behalf.*
- *“that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”: This is so different from our current day when so many avoid the teaching of exactly these things. Perhaps they themselves do not have them to teach. Perhaps. But the Lord’s work is so great and of such critical importance for all to know that the apostle here makes such a pointed and detailed reference to it.*

- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work”: ***Fruit is the natural exception from those who have spiritual life. The true and authentic fruit (for it may easily be counterfeited by the enemy) is discerned by the truth upon which it has been founded.***
- “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power”: ***Three different words for power are used here for emphasis. Glory is the reflection of the working of Almighty God! Glory, glory, glory! Amen.***
- “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”: ***Such wonderful words these must have been to hear read by the leaders in the Colossian assembly. Grace is so wonderful and always so powerful. We have all been qualified to inherit what has been promised to the saints.***

III. Christ the Creator of all Things Is Also our Glorious Savior and Head:

[READ] Col. 1:13-14

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

- “Who hath delivered us”: ***The past tenses are so significant. Christ’s work on the cross and his shed blood accomplished it “once for all”. Once it has been received by faith, our faith goes back to the completed sacrifice that has accomplished it all.***
- “And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”: ***Our faith then as written here looks up towards our heavenly position in Christ Jesus where we are now by the mighty power of God seated in Christ at the Father’s right hand.***
- “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”: ***The blood of our redemption is mentioned twice here (also in verse 20). The knowledge of the shed blood is of critical importance. Many today, even well known leaders (like John MacArthur and others) deny the power of the blood. Shameful indeed that is. The fundamentals of our faith is what Paul is writing here to the Colossian believers.***

[READ] Col. 1:15-19

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:
16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.
19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

- “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist”: ***This is one of the most amazing statements in the Word regarding the creation. The emphasis is on spiritual authorities in the heavenlies. Christ is the creator and all have been created also “for him”, that is, for his glory! It all holds together as well by his power. The physical creation is also implied but that is not the major focus here.***
- “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”: ***But that is not all. The focus now changes to the Church which is His Body! This is part of the sacred secret, the mystery, revealed to Paul for us. Only the apostle Paul writes of the Body of Christ, no one else. Take note!***
- “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”: ***“Fullness” is a special word to the apostle. He uses it 13 times in his letters. In Christ all fullness dwells. And later in this letter (2:19) we will learn that we also in him have been “made” fullness. Amen.***
- ***The bottom line is this: “It pleased the Father”. Amen.***

IV. We Are the Eternal Focus of Christ’s Glorious Plan of Reconciliation:

[READ] Col. 1:20-23

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

- “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”: ***This reconciliation is underway, on earth at least.***

See 2 Cor. 5:20.

- “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight”: ***The great salvation through his blood has enabled our reconciliation. The saints have received it and they stand therefore reconciled to God. So peace reigns. Even better, we shall all be presented “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” at that day to God our Savior. This is after the Judgment Seat of Christ, of course. This language is exalted, heavenly, and imbued with spiritual power that is designed to transform the partaker. It is spiritual food indeed. Notice that the blood is again mentioned here for it is so important to always keep in mind.***

This is radical: sinners to saints, wicked to holy, rebels to servants, worthy of judgment to without fault before God Almighty. Take it to heart always and see what a difference that makes.

- “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister”: ***“If” could rightly be translated “since indeed”. The peace treaty has been signed. But how many will receive it? Or will they go on religiously and self-righteously until it is too late? Eventually the offer will expire and the plan, the dispensation will change entirely. Grace will end as a metric and works will be back in the center focus. And everything will be about Israel again. We will all be in heaven’s glory. Praise God.***

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V. Paul's Message and Ministry for his Church Is Now Revealed for his and our Eternal Glory:

[READ] Col. 1:24-29

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

- “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church”: ***This is language that may seem beyond our ability to comprehend. But the spirit dwells within and can give us understanding. I believe it has to do with the intimacy within the Body with Christ as our head. We therefore mutually suffer and rejoice. This is not only for Paul, we can be sure of that.***
- “the dispensation of God which is given to me for you”: ***Now we have opportunity to consider this new word, “dispensation”. The word means “administration” and Paul was given it to administer. It was given to no one else, not even Peter. So God is ruling his creation using selected administrators and under the rule of various administrations. There have been many since the creation. Consider Moses as a great example of this. He was the administrator of the Dispensation of the Law. Ages are for revealing something about God while dispensations reveal something about mankind. The Law showed that a rule book can never bring about a holy and righteous humanity. When that is taken away, under our***

current administration of grace, we learn that grace also fails. Every dispensation fails therefore. But we therefore are not under the Law but are “under grace”. Grace rules therefore and grace, not law, teaches us. See Titus 2 for that. How well are we being taught? Now that is a good question.

- “to fulfil [or, Gk. ‘Fill full’ or ‘complete’] the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints”: ***The revelation of God’s abundant grace and this dispensation was kept secret (it was unrevealed) before it was given to Paul for us. But now that it has been given, God’s word has been completed. God’s intention therefore for us is to make it known.***
- "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach ...": ***Now the apostle reveals the apex or summit of this teaching: Christ in us Gentiles, the hope of glory! Glory, glory, glory. Amen! So wonderful. But it comes at a price. For Christ, his shed blood, death and glorious resurrection. For us, we are so warned:***
- “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily”:
- ***Paul as administrator of this new dispensation of the grace of God knows full well therefore that in this administration it is God’s grace that is to be the center of our focus, ministry, and work always. All need to be warned therefore of false spiritualities which the enemy uses to turn many away from the Lord of glory. False doctrine rather than healthy doctrine therefore is what is found apart from the ministry of God’s abundant grace. Why? Because legalisms excite the sin nature dwelling within each of us. It is that simple.***

Conclusions / Application:

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